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Militarized Capitalism? The Apparel Industry's Role in Scripting a Post-War National Identity in Sri Lanka

Kanchana N. Ruwanpura

*Institute of Geography, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK;
kanchana.ruwanpura@ed.ac.uk*

Abstract: This paper examines new garment factories in the former war zone of North and East Sri Lanka. This paper elucidates the role of the state–military–capital nexus in the Sri Lankan government's efforts to rebuild the nation following a longstanding ethnic war, a post-war development strategy that has emphasized investment and job creation. Drawing on fieldwork with numerous managers and more in-depth exploration in one such garment factory, the paper shows how garment industry managers deployed a Sinhala-Buddhist management ethos to produce an unmarked class of modern workers and, in doing so, played an active role in re-scripting narratives of the nation. Therefore, we argue that capital is imbricated in the government's militarized nation-building efforts, and we call for more attention to how the industrial capital–military–state nexus may be shaping and re-producing power relations in the North and East of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, garment industry, labor relations, military, capital

Friends, we have brought massive development to the North and East regions as never witnessed in history after removing their fear of death. *Uthuru Vasanthaya* (Northern Spring) and *Nagenahira Navodaya* (Eastern Awakening) are some of the major development projects in the country. (Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa)¹

Introduction

The end of the thirty-year conflict in May 2009 ushered in a new era of development in Sri Lanka, in which the state framed the path to peace in terms of an economic development imperative. As indicated by former President Rajapaksa's remarks, "massive development" was the state's primary strategy for saving the people in the North and East from their violent past and "awakening" the nation. In this formulation, capital was assigned not only an economic role in rebuilding war-ravaged areas, but also an important political and ideological role in consolidating the nation—a "new Sri Lanka". Rather than acknowledging the rich, complex, and often fraught ethnic diversity within the country, the Rajapaksa government emphasized national unity. The underlying premise was that jobs and economic growth would generate the political will necessary and sufficient to overcome ethnic tensions.

As the state embarked upon its initiative to shift industrial production to the North and East beginning around 2008, the war was ongoing and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) still maintained control over many areas. The

political insecurity led the state to provide direct military support to capitalists who opened factories in war-affected areas. Thus, the normative spaces and roles of the military expanded, as the military helped the industry secure the property, production sites and labor force it needed to produce garments and other goods.

The literature on the global apparel industry has primarily focused on its role as a catalyst for development in neoliberal development strategies, and typically conceptualizes the relationship driving this process as one between the state and capital or state—capital—women (Enloe 1989). The extant feminist scholarship analyses labor, identities, and power relations, underlining how citizenship and nationhood are continually re-articulated through everyday discourses and practices on the shop floor (Ong 1987; Salzinger 2003; Wright 2006). Yet few studies address how globalized industrial capital articulates post-war social formations, specifically militarized landscapes emerging from war or authoritarian regimes. This paper begins to tackle this lacuna by examining the emergence of an alliance between the military, the state, and capital in Sri Lanka to shift garment production to the post-war areas of the North and East. I employ Hall's (1980) concept of articulation to outline a theory of how economic, political, and ideological logics have served to validate a form of "militarized capitalism"—high levels of military support and presence that make the expansion of capitalist production and creation of a labor force possible.

I argue that capital is deeply imbricated in the Sri Lankan state's militarized nation-building efforts, specifically through the creation of a nationalist management ethos and a set of accompanying practices in garment factory premises in post-war areas of Sri Lanka.² My general aim is to stimulate debate about post-war development practices within a conflict-ridden world by examining the critical role a military—capital alliance played in shaping Sri Lanka's post-war national identity. I contend that it matters *how* this process of setting up factories and creating a workforce occurs, is challenging, or else re-inscribing old power asymmetries and tensions. This line of inquiry is relevant not only in Sri Lanka but also other countries emerging from war, authoritarian, or militarized polities, such as Myanmar or Cambodia.

Militarism, Management and Manufacturing (3Ms)

I begin by outlining a framework to conceptualize prospective interconnections between three vectors in post-conflict development: manufacturing, management, and military. Sanyal (2007) calls us to rethink post-colonial capitalist development as integral to appreciating the complex regime of power with its unique modalities. Because the "wasteland of the dispossessed"—that sub-population which is excluded from participating in capitalist relations of production—poses a potential threat to capitalism and civil society, according to him development becomes a form of bio-political power and poverty management to keep the surplus population politically quiescent (Gidwani and Wainwright 2014). While for Sanyal, "the post-colonial state is operated by development discourse rather than being an operator of it" (Gidwani and Wainwright 2014:42), this paper outlines a new moment

of articulation in post-war Sri Lanka's development—where a previously excluded rural population is reincorporated into an “accumulation economy” via a state–capital–military nexus in a politically subordinated position. Drawing on Hall (1980) to theorize the ongoing re-articulation of capital and society, I show how the mechanics of this re-articulation process are orchestrated through a tripartite manufacturing–military–management alliance, and the deployment of ethno-nationalist discourses on the shop floor. In doing so, in contrast to Werner and Bair's (2011) insightful feminist analysis of processes of disarticulation, this paper seeks to outline a moment of incorporation into global capitalism in post-war Sri Lanka, where the need to assess it for iterative forms of inclusion (and exclusion) in circuits of capital accumulation is called for (see also Werner 2016). By focusing on the re-insertion of a previously excluded population using Sanyal's (2007) conceptualization of post-colonial capitalism as a “capital/non-capital complex”, this paper seeks to explore (a) how ethnic community experiences of the past are downplayed and discounted; (b) how aspirations for “normalcy” are exploited; and (c) new forms of dominance and subordination within the shop space replace old military and para-military regimes of dominance and subordination.

A long tradition of feminist scholars has been attentive to the micro- and meso-level processes of globalization and subject formation (Enloe 1989; Ong 1987). Several have specifically focused on how hegemonic cultures of work and management influence and interpellate laboring subjects (Ong 1987; Salzinger 2003; Wright 2006). A subset that includes South Asian, including Sri Lankan feminist scholars, has studied shop floor practices and its gendered articulations (Hewamanne 2008; Lynch 2007; Siddiqui 2009). Another thread in the feminist scholarship has investigated questions of worker identity and subjectivity as articulated and informed by managers and transnational actors (Goger 2013; Ruwanpura and Hughes 2016; Salzinger 2003; Siddiqui 2000, 2015; Wright 2006). Methodologically, corporate interviews and interviews with “experts” or “elites” are commonly used to reveal how normative discourses, terrains of struggle, and power relations are being reconfigured (Goger 2013; Schoenberger 1991). In factory settings, normative discourses—in particular work places and business networks—are analyzed as tools of interpellation and subject formation that produce the desired traits and behaviors of worker-subjects, though not without friction.

My paper draws on these analytical approaches to understand how senior and mid-level managers in Sri Lanka's post-war garment factories³ are contributing to a state-led effort to produce a new unified national identity and unmarked worker-subjects. The motivations are two-fold. First, as previously noted, feminist and labor scholars have theorized how management ideologies, discourses and practices structure and reproduce the conditions for worker formation on the shop floor. They have also considered how nationalism pervades the shop floor and how serving the nation is projected as a much-needed calling for workers (Hewamanne 2008; Lynch 2007; Ruwanpura and Hughes 2016; Siddiqui 2009). Yet, this literature is conspicuously silent on how capital does not merely invoke logics of anti-colonialism and nationalism, but may also draw upon logics of coercion (including use of military force) to further its interests. This absence is particularly telling in South Asia; Bangladesh's adoption of free market policies and its

subsequent emergence as an apparel supplier powerhouse began under a military regime (Siddiqui 2000), and in Pakistan, the military complex, is a powerful backdrop of its social polity to date. To the best of my knowledge, no feminist or labor scholar has attempted to unpack how the triumvirate of capital, state, and military has combined to shape shop floor practices—although Enloe's (1989) early interventions did signal that a nexus involving these forces has frequently drawn upon women (including workers) and regulated their conduct in multifarious ways, in order to give shape to the political economy.

For analyses of post-war Sri Lanka, neglect of the military aspect of development is unpardonable given the country's recent history of conflict. Thus, Kadirgamar (2013) calls for the need to appreciate the military's vital role in deepening neoliberal policies in a post-war setting, aiding and abetting political economic transformations. He urges researchers to register the historical continuities and various layers of ideological mobilization at play in post-war Sri Lanka. Cognizant of this milieu, the starting point of my analysis is to note that the apparel industry's decision to expand to the North and East was motivated not only by national politics, but also by the industry's threatened position in global apparel markets. How apparel manufacturers in Sri Lanka are facing a labor shortage because of a shrinking supply of labor, and the various methods deployed by industrialists to negotiate and overcome this potential crisis, is noted elsewhere (Goger 2013; Gunawardana 2014; Ruwanpura 2015).

The joining of the ideological realm and economic processes of production helps theorize how relations of dominance and subordination in Sri Lanka are being re-negotiated and re-articulated with new narratives of the nation. I employ both Hall (1980) and Sanyal (2007) to outline how manufacturing, management, and military came together in post-war Sri Lanka. These emergent connections, however, have a longer history, which De Mel (2007) and Kadirgamar (2013) have already traced. Sanyal's (2007:217) recent interventions on development and hegemony are valuable to propel my argument; specifically his notion of hegemony as a "discursive articulation that produces a regime of identities and meanings" reflects management tools of interpellation. While Sanyal (2007:218) contends that the complex form of hegemony "promotes and valorizes the other, instead of suppressing and silencing it", this paper attempts to trace a moment in post-colonial capitalist development in post-war Sri Lanka, where a previously excluded surplus population was valorized for integrating a "new" nation. However, as I trace below, the ideological and identity markers of this population were purposefully subjected to silencing and erasure.

Sanyal's input echoes Hall's (1980:322) view that this "emergent theory of the articulation of different modes of production begins to deliver certain pertinent theoretical effects for an analysis of racism at the social, political and ideological levels". For my purposes, this juxtaposition is useful for analyzing ethnic relations within production spaces in post-war Sri Lanka, where there is also an effort to reshape the social, political and ideological spheres. So instead of Sanyal's turn to the analytical lens of bio-politics à la Foucault, Hall's emphasis, via Althusser and Gramsci, eases outlining how "hegemony is a state of play in the class struggle, which has ... to be continually worked and reconstructed ... to be maintained"

(1980:332). De Mel (2007) has analyzed the centrality of the ideological realm in shaping Sri Lanka's militarized processes, where she zooms in on popular culture—the real, imagined, overt and masked—as enacted by both the LTTE and military. She argues that these ideological processes of militarism have facilitated normalizing “militancy as exemplary and applicable in solving civilian and political issues” (De Mel 2007:239): the repressive state apparatus (RSA) that inscribed the Sri Lankan landscape over three decades. How it encroaches into the ideological state apparatus (ISA) began with De Mel's (2007) invaluable scrutiny of cultural terrains; yet, when Kadirgamar (2013) calls for appreciating how the military works in consort with capital in deepening neoliberal policies, it is also a petition to uncover ideology as a material practice. By examining how manufacturing, management and military (3Ms) came together in post-war Sri Lanka, my paper is a modest effort at spurring further analysis. The paper outlines how the alliance between manufacturing, management and military matters for “securing the conditions for the expanded reproduction of capital” (Hall 1980:334). The nexus of the 3Ms is pivotal for appreciating the constant *becoming* of capital in post-war Sri Lanka. While for Sanyal (2007:96), the complex form of hegemony expresses “itself through difference”, in the inclusion of traumatized people from war-torn landscapes of Sri Lanka what this paper outlines is how the complex hegemonic order etched purposefully curtailed the expression of disparities. The interpellation of subjects had its own contradictions reflecting the specific historicity of Sri Lanka's recent militarized processes.

Familiar Fields?

This paper draws on longer-term research conducted on ethical trade, upgrading, and labor practices in the Sri Lankan apparel sector since 2008. A variety of research methods were used in this research, including multi-sited interviews with managers, factory visits, and participant-observation research at two factories. The research fell at the cusp of Sri Lanka's military offensive, which affected the apparel sector in complex ways. In the immediate post-war years, research access to the new factories in the North and East was risky because of ongoing political tensions and the growing authoritarianism of the Rajapaksa government. Annelies Goger seized on a rare opportunity to visit a newly established factory in Eastern Sri Lanka for three days in 2011, and has generously shared her empirical data with me. In addition, in 2014 I interviewed 10 senior managers whose companies had moved to the North and the East (or had considered doing so). All these interviews as well as my long-term research in the area inform this paper's analysis.

Having outlined the theoretical framing in the section above, the next section traces hegemonic discourses that have shaped post-war Sri Lanka and the military fiscalism policies underpinning Sri Lanka's post-war apparel industry strategy. This milieu helps situate the empirical findings, which document how apparel industry managers deployed an ethno-nationalist management ethos, attempted to instill a modern mindset in their workforce, and actively participated in the state's efforts to re-script narratives of the nation on the shop floor. The conclusions of this paper

bear in mind that Sri Lanka's political landscape and economic development policies are in flux, given the unexpected defeat of Rajapaksa in the 2015 election.

Hegemonic Discourses of Post-War Sri Lanka

Until 2009, Sri Lanka had been besieged by a 30-year ethnic war, which ceased with the military defeat of the LTTE—the main separatist group espousing a hardline Tamil nationalist line. The Sri Lankan state acquired substantial political capital through the defeat of the LTTE. The populace felt a palpable sense of relief, and they were enamored with a Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist state that espoused reconstruction as the only pathway to address enduring political questions around ethnic grievances. The resounding military victory also reinforced and legitimized the increasing militarization of Sri Lankan society, which began during the 30-year period.

The burgeoning literature in the post-war period has focused on how the former Sri Lankan government approached and strategized reconstruction and reconciliation (Bastian 2013; Keerawella 2013). What militarization has meant for labor in Southern post-war Sri Lanka and the unacknowledged militarization of the Sri Lankan space has been previously brought up (De Mel 2007; Hewamanne 2009). For Sri Lankan apparels, the country's decades of political violence and conflict facilitated its expansion, and yet as the early interventions by Hewamanne (2008) and Lynch (2007) note, the process was built on gendered contradictions. Specifically, they show how work opportunities targeted young women while often the perpetrators of violence were young men.

The rise of neoliberal economic policies starting in 1977 and a protracted war contributed to increased economic inequality in Sri Lanka (Bastian 2013; Venugopal 2011). Rural–urban disparities caused growing tensions not only between the LTTE and the Sinhalese government, but also among different Sinhalese political groups (Venugopal 2011). The decline of public subsidies and social security systems led Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists to assert a new political morality, specifically a need to fulfill “the material and spiritual needs of the poor” (Venugopal 2011:70). The state responded to this political pressure primarily by creating employment via the military and subsidizing private industry to create or move jobs to smaller villages and rural areas to mop up the fallouts from the gradual erosion of the welfare state. Unabated market reform ultimately reconfigured state–society relations and deepened capitalist relations, such that industrial capitalists are now heavily involved in the state's efforts to shape the post-war development trajectory of Sri Lanka.

“Business for peace” was the mainstay political rhetoric between 2001 and 2004 (Venugopal 2010). During much of the prolonged conflict period, the Sri Lankan economy managed to avoid any notable collapse. The recession of 2001, coming together with a series of sustained terrorist attacks and a drought, resulted in economic contraction for the first time since independence (Bastian 2013:7). This led the business community to argue that the war was an indulgence and a burden, and a politics of “liberal peace” stemming from private sector involvement was born (Venugopal 2010:224). The inherent contradictions of pursuing a market-driven peace effort without broad political support eventually fell apart, paving

the way for the Rajapaksa regime's militarized strategy starting in 2005, its eventual military victory over the LTTE, and subsequent authoritarianism.

The charge often leveled against the "liberal peace" rhetoric is that it absolves the government from accommodating plural identities at multiple levels of societal structure, public policy, and state identity (Bastian 2013; Thaheer et al. 2013; Venugopal 2010, 2011). The role of the state is the primary object of ire of these critics. They contend that state patronage towards the military and deployment of the military in reconstruction projects, or "military fiscalism", has allowed the government to portray militarization as necessary for creating jobs and promoting development in the North and East. However, capital is a missing element in their analysis. My paper remedies this neglect, showing how local capital is implicated in these same militarized processes of development and how capital, too, neglects the specific spatialities of a post-war setting.

The "Wild East"?⁴ Eastern Sri Lanka and its Uniqueness

Eastern Sri Lanka is a unique part of the country and is celebrated by feminist scholars for its matrilineal inheritance patterns and land rights available to women (Agarwal 1996). As a consequence, women from both Muslim and Tamil communities in the region have been positioned quite strongly in gender relations historically. Yet the upheavals wrought by the conflict tempered and bore upon women and their livelihood strategies in uneven ways (Ruwanpura 2006; Ruwanpura and Humphries 2004), with patriarchal structures embedded within the dominant ethno-nationalist projects oppressively pervading women's lives. As diverse feminist scholars pointed out during the peak of the conflict, the war was pulling apart prevalent gender regimes (de Alwis 1998; Maunaguru 1995); they anticipated that once the war was concluded stock-taking would be required in order to fathom the knocks inflicted on a fragile socius.

In the aftermath of the war, the only extensive study undertaken in the North and East on processes of reconciliation justifiably foregrounded the trauma, grievances and palpable insecurity experienced by Muslims and Tamils, particularly women (Thaheer et al. 2013). Even as all communities acknowledge that post-war Sri Lanka is a place within which their physical security is assured, they do not feel free from fear (Thaheer et al. 2013:31–32). When security is conceptualized more broadly, local communities continue to grapple with fractured social relations, community breakdowns and familial collapse alongside material deprivation. The deep and lingering sense of vulnerability felt by Tamils who resided in LTTE controlled areas—memories of brutality, multiple displacements, and forcible recruitment by the LTTE, all heightened during the last stages of the war—reveal a collective trauma that is not negligible.

It is within this milieu that several garment factories have been set up in the North and East of Sri Lanka, with the government offering a variety of incentives for investors to do so. Our interviews with numerous stakeholders in the garment industry confirmed that several leading garment companies were operating there or planning to do so. By 2011, according to the Secretary General of the Joint Apparel Association Forum (JAAF), three garment factories had already been set up in the

Eastern Province and nine were in development (Samaraweera 2011). Since 2011, garment factories have opened in Killinochi, Vavuniya, and Mannar too.

Our informants said that the government offered a five-year tax holiday, favorable land leasing terms, communications and electricity infrastructure, and fast-track development approvals to local investors as incentives. The government via the military has also built numerous roads, bridges, and other infrastructure to improve transportation networks in the former conflict areas (see Thaheer et al. 2013). The investors benefited not only from these incentives; the garment companies were also tempted by the prospect of large surplus labor pools that desperately needed employment. All interviewees also mentioned that the state was keen on targeting youth because their employment would prevent them from getting embroiled in insurrectionary activity. These observations echo a previous epoch in Sri Lanka's troubled political history in the mid-1990s, when the 200 Garment Factory Program (GFP) set up rural factories to assuage disaffected youth (potential rebels) through job creation (Lynch 2007). A Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist undercurrent of imbuing foreign capital with "Sri Lankan" moral values shaped these rural industrialization efforts—although, at the time, the North and East was excluded because of the ongoing war. The end of the war presented an opportunity to disseminate a similar vision across the entire nation. One senior manager, echoing the opening lines of the former President, said that expanding production to the North and East was a chance to forge a "new future, economic freedom ... secure jobs, to earn, prosper in life ... take biased-ness out of their life". In this incorporation of a previously excluded population into a process of capitalist development, the desire to eliminate "bias" is significant because it flags the desire on the part of Sinhala employers to un-mark subjects, or to rid them of ethnic distinctions and all of the pre-suppositions that purportedly accompany them. In no uncertain terms, the biased-ness was "theirs", not "ours" or that of the Sinhala-nationalist state—and these "biases", it was supposed, could be erased through economic freedom rather than granting of political rights. Unlike Sanyal's (2007:235) otherwise incisive analysis, I contend that an analysis of post-colonial capitalism in a context like Sri Lanka's cannot afford to preoccupy exclusively with the "logics of accumulation and need ... [as they exist] within the compass of the market". Instead, I contend that capital, with apparel manufacturing managers as its bearers (*Träger*), first had to undertake the discursive work of un-marking citizen-subjects from ethnic war mentalities of the past before it could successfully rearticulate them into production as modern worker-subjects; echoing Hall's (1980:339) call for us to be attentive to "how different ... ethnic groups [are] inserted historically" into capitalist social formations (see also Werner and Bair 2011).

Managers in the factory visited reported that the investing company received US \$1,000,000 from the Sri Lankan government to build the factory,⁵ with stipulations: operations had to commence before a particular date and employ 100 workers in order to qualify for a five-year tax holiday (which covered two divisions of the mother company, not just the factory in the East). The government also helped to fast-track approvals to lease the land, establish Internet and cell phone technologies, ensure adequate electricity. Recruiting workers from particular villages was done with the aid of the military, since it had information about the demographic

profiles of neighboring villages; ethical trade aside, apparel industrialists unblinkingly used military intelligence information. The central import of the military and its support in ensuring the land was appropriately ready for building factories, where this was the case, was also repeated in other interviews. In the case study factory, during the conflict state security escorted merchandize out of the conflict zone and supplied secure military-based housing to the general manager because he was a potential target for violence.

Each garment company investing in the North and East established training centers prior to opening the factory for production, because of the potentially lower skills and education levels of the local workforce in former LTTE-controlled areas. These training sessions focus on technical skills and “soft skills”, such as time management, “grooming”, and personal hygiene. Additionally, training incorporated team-building activities. The pre-job training in the factory visited lasted eight weeks and then on-the-job training continued for another six months. Employers provided one meal per shift, a second meal at a subsidized cost, transportation from home (buses or vans), and medical services on site. USAID partnered with the firm to provide bus transportation to villages up to two hours away. A health facility was located on-site. No counselors visited that factory (common to factories in the South), but a bilingual (Tamil/Sinhalese) training manager informally served in this capacity.

The active state involvement to offer tax holidays and financial incentives to the corporate sector lubricates a policy regime that has fervent faith in the ability of the market to deliver economic dividends to war-affected people. USAID’s involvement with capital and the state testifies to the centrality of the industrialization-as-peace discourse. The importance of the military for capital and the ways that factory managers actively participated in (re-)scripting the national narrative signal the complexity of the ideological formation that underwrites “militarized capitalism”. By chronicling this moment, my paper responds to Werner and Bair’s (2011:992) call for “a deeper engagement with the processes that engender the forging and breaking of links between circuits of commodity production, people and places”.

Management Ethos

The strong partnership between the government, military and capital was evident in how the company that owned Factory A set it up and recruited the workforce. Factory A opened before the war ended. They started with 60 workers, and by 2011, the workforce had grown to roughly 500. In establishing the factory, the management intentionally recruited both Tamil and Sinhalese workers affected by the war.⁶ At the time of research, 40% of the workers were Sinhalese and 60% were Tamil. While the factory was under construction, the management set up a training center in an abandoned schoolhouse in a Sinhalese neighborhood, and then, once the factory was complete (a process which was fast-tracked by the government), they moved there to continue training and commence operations. Military escorts also helped transport the finished garments out of the former conflict zone with armored vehicles and built new roads out of the area with three contractors operating concurrently through day and night.

The firm bussed the management team weekly from Colombo, and during the week they stayed in company-provided housing about one hour from the factory—outside the former war zone. They were predominantly Sinhalese men who did not speak Tamil—with the exception of the training supervisor, who was a locally based bilingual woman.⁷ The general manager was a middle-aged Sinhalese man who was well connected to the elite business networks in the country, having attended one of the top boys' private schools in Colombo. He constantly fielded phone calls from colleagues and other associates, signaling the vitality of social networking. Therefore, from the beginning the management structure of this particular factory reproduced class, ethnicity, gender, urban/rural, and West/East distinctions.

The general manager drove to the factory weekly from Colombo in a 17-year-old army-like jeep, which he said took about five hours each way. He had been doing this trip for three years, since the factory opened. When we asked why he kept a job with such a long commute for so long, he said he liked it because he felt like he was going out to the "Wild East". Especially at the start with an active war, he said there was a sense of adventure because of the associated risks. At that time, the government had arranged for him to live on a military compound on the beach, because of the potential threat to his life. The way in which a militarized government provided protection for the manager and how he saw his own role as an adventurer suggests that the government and the investing firms perceived this initiative almost as if it were a military mission in itself, or an extension of one (see also De Mel 2007). In fact, a manager said: "We worked with the government to come here, because it was in the government's best interest for us to come and get the LTTE out of the war, so they were very supportive at that stage". Contrary to Sanyal's (2007:226) observation that "the need economy remains the space of confinement for the dispossessed and castaways of capitalist development", the immediate post-war moment in Sri Lanka called for deploying a state–capital–military alliance to re-incorporate previously excluded people to mediate the capitalist's needs for (cheaper) labor and the state's needs for forging a unified vision of a "new" Sri Lanka.⁸ They were equally aware that strategically investing early in a war-torn area was likely to pay off for them in their efforts to improve relationships with the government and gain political clout with the Rajapaksa regime. Moreover, the manager explicitly acknowledged that having USAID on board at various stages was tactical in avoiding retaliation by the LTTE because: "Any attack on a US partnership, it was assumed ... would have a detrimental effect on [the LTTE's] funding abilities". Building alliances with the state, the military and the international donor community was seen as an important aspect of high-level management life, and was a way of securing subsidized access to an untapped (and comparatively cheap) labor pool in the post-war landscape. Starting business operations in this context, however, was not easy work and required cultivating ties at the highest levels because, as they said, they wanted to stay for at least 30 years.

The alliances with the state also went deeper, in terms of how the managers approached their work. The managers conceptualized their role as paternal modernizing and emancipating agents, providing employment opportunities to the "girls",⁹ instilling new mindsets, and thereby helping to raise the economic

standard in the area. For example, we asked the general manager whether he thought the factory would continue to operate after the tax holiday expired, and he said yes, and then continued:

Because ... this area is definitely changing, certainly from when I first came ... And when it changes, I think that the economic standard is going up in this area. And people are getting more used to having money. There is a greater need for money, whereas earlier they would have planted something ... So now they have to plant their own fields, there are people buying tractors, there are other things. So, the economic standard is going up. And when the economic standard goes up, it creates a demand for money. And the demand for money will lead to demand for jobs.

The manager clearly expressed satisfaction with his role in increasing the cultural significance of money and jobs in the area and raising economic standards. This signals a high level of concern for the “development” of the post-war regions—a nation-building perspective rather than a narrow focus on producing garments. He did not portray this transformation as something that benefitted the company itself, but instead he positioned the factory as a benefactor and saw it as his duty to help war-affected communities recover and rebuild a fractured nation. He was not alone in articulating this vision because our other management interviewees expressed similar sentiments. These articulations signal the incessant and persistent efforts of a form of managerialism that seeks to script a particular national identity from the conjunctural terrain of post-war Sri Lanka—in order to “selectively transform ... existing social relations and forms of production” (Werner and Bair 2011:989).

Thus, as noted, the management ethos was deeply imbued with the perception of the factory as a modernizing force (see also Hewamane 2008; Lynch 2007). The visible and symbolic support of the military and donor organizations, such as USAID, was portrayed as necessary to stabilize the war-affected areas so that the industry could securely manufacture garments and bring in a culture of valuing money and work. Thus, the managers saw the militarization of everyday life as a necessary part of the development process, rather than a threat to relations among local communities (see also De Mel 2007; Thaheer et al. 2013). Although this factory is not necessarily representative of all new factories in the North and East in terms of the particularities of the management structure, it did set a tone in this particular local area regarding who was targeted and how in the process of scripting the post-war national identity. What these cursory findings suggest is that during a period of post-war transition, “relations of capitalism can be thought of as articulating classes in distinct ways at each of the ... instances of the social formation—economic, political and ideological” (Hall 1980:340). The next section explores the making of a modern workforce, elucidating how capital is deeply engaged in shaping how the ideological realm articulates with production processes.

Changing Mindsets: The Making of a Modern Workforce

The management in Factory A actively sought to change the hegemonic cultures of work in the post-war areas by instilling a modern work ethic, or in their words,

“changing mindsets”. It is through these efforts to valorize particular cultural traits in the work environment and devalue others that the managers also play a role in subject formation (Goger 2013; Werner and Bair 2011; Wright 2006). The management at Factory A became keenly aware that the new workforce did not have the desired work ethic for efficient garment production, and this became one of the top challenges. The effort to instill the proper work ethic commenced during the initial trainings, subsidized by USAID, where potential workers were taught not only the technical skills of sewing operations (which came last), but also the skills of managing time, discipline, personal hygiene, and communicating effectively when there is a problem (rather than staying silent). As one manager said: “Most of the Tamil girls—because they hadn’t gone to school—very few could read or write their names. So, we started from there”.¹⁰

Similarly managers saw the factory as a mechanism for bringing about higher social and economic standards in the community. For example, when asked what it means to be a good factory or employer, one human resource manager said:

It’s about the workers ... What [do] they need from us? What [do] they really need from the company? For example, how these Tamil girls—it’s not of utmost importance for them, the job. So how do we handle this challenge? So we have to give a background. We have to change their minds to make them think how misinformed that was. We have to act. So, likewise, the factory should understand their employees ... and their welfare.

The presumption that management made, therefore, was that the perceptions of workers were “misinformed” and required their intervention to change; they saw this as part of improving the welfare of the community as a whole—of making modern mindsets (cf. Inkeles 1969). In doing so, they cast themselves in the role of deploying modernity, which carries historical baggage considering that the managers are mostly Sinhala men from Colombo—an epicenter for the political voice of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. Tropes of modernity were deployed because it was a means through which managers were trying to articulate themselves in a powerful role in global production vis-à-vis the workers and residents of the region. While the managers framed their involvement as benevolent gestures, they were curiously oblivious to how, given the military history in the area, using the military to help recruit workers and export goods may come across as intimidating to the workers and local residents.

Yet these moments were not devoid of contestations and challenges. Some of the most significant challenges managements faced were absenteeism and retention (a plausible side effect of a difficult transition into wage labor). In response, managers doubled up on their efforts to get workers and their families to see the importance of waged employment and garment production. For example, one manager described how they incorporated new cultural values into the daily tea breaks.

We all sit and talk with them. “What are the problems that you have?” And we, one-by-one, explain: “What is the importance? Why do you have to be here every day? How much you can earn [*sic*]? What is the importance of the job? How you can manage your job, your activities [*sic*]?” so the face-to-face discussion, we have an impact, we have a result. Now, early days ... the figures were very bad. 12–13% absenteeism. Now it is 6%.

As Gunawardana (2014) has analyzed for elsewhere in the Sri Lankan apparel sector, giving informal voice to workers is an important tool that managers deploy to ensure productivity gains. By cultivating intimacy and encouraging workers to voice concerns and troubles, she argues management attempts to ply worker trust and generate affective bonds between itself and labor so as to engender teamwork, thereby enhancing productivity (Gunawardana 2014:10; see also De Neve 2008; Ruwanpura 2015).

The managers also reported an intention to meet with parents, to talk with them about the value of factory employment and what the family stood to gain from making sure their daughter went to work every day. “The parents also commit to ensuring she comes to work, otherwise they feel guilty ... We’ll have a kind of commitment so they’ll push”. Absenteeism and retention problems reinforced to management how much effort was necessary to cultivate a mindset that enabled them to profitably produce garments. They felt that they could not successfully change mindsets without extending their reach to the broader social sphere, contacting parents and spending time in their villages.

Managers also had trouble getting the workers to make efficient changeovers from one product line to another, which they considered an artifact of an outdated mindset. A manager described the problem and what they were doing about it as follows:

These people are not adapted to the changes. They have been doing the same range of product for the last two years ... so with [the change] these girls are a bit put under a bigger pressure ... So we talk to the girls, and we train then, and we make up their mindset. Because they have to adapt to these changes, otherwise we can’t go ahead. So that message we give to the employees.

By using a discourse of needing to change the mindset in order for the enterprise to “go ahead”, the managers conveyed that “these people” were inhabited as workers by their attachment to familiar practices—completely failing to recognize that a variety of other factors that could be causing their workers additional stress, such as the psychological effects of war trauma.¹¹ We observed a lack of understanding about the effects of trauma in general among the management, as well as its potential effects on productivity. Therefore, although the managers tried to implement high-pressure production incentives and to reward traits, such as ambition, leadership, and adaptability, it is likely that this exacerbated some of the trauma symptoms that workers were experiencing, such as anxiety, lack of confidence in trying new things, and tendency to cling to familiar routines.

What was also revealing in the Sinhala managers’ sentiment was that they felt it was their duty to uplift a “backward” minority community to contemporary standards. The paternalism and the implicit ethno-nationalist frameworks that they were drawing upon seemed immune to deeper reflection. Nor was there deliberation on the difficulties of using former LTTE cadres, who had been subject to intense forms of discipline and regimentation, and who were now being asked to transition into another highly regimented setting—a move that carried the prospect of triggering traumatic responses, particularly for ex-LTTE women cadre.¹²

Thus, managers in Factory A were not merely intent on creating a new mindset for a new class of workers, but also unthinkingly summoning paternalistic and ethno-nationalist tropes in the hope of producing worker-subjects who would be able to leave behind the marks of their ethnicity and violent past; in short, the fantasy of the unmarked worker who would be obedient and motivated to respect new forms of capitalist authority rather than forms of authority aligned along the hitherto dominant axis of ethnicity. These actions supported the state in its efforts of creating a “unified” Sri Lankan identity, although one infused with majoritarian Sinhala-Buddhist values (see also Hewamanne 2008; Lynch 2007). How these managers were so seemingly unmindful of the political sensitivity of their work in war-affected areas was telling. Further research with workers and local communities is necessary to assess the scale of this disconnect and its effect on a re-scripted post-war Sri Lanka. The capital–state–military trinity did not appear to be well grounded in how its post-war militarized strategy was negotiated locally, aside from an emphasis on generating livelihood opportunities. Instead, it appeared that managers were relying on the unquestioned assumption that they knew what was best for these communities and had their best interests—and the nation’s best interests—at heart. In other words, to paraphrase Hall (1985:341) slightly, ethnicity is also a “modality in which class is lived ... and experienced”, with the apparel sector embarking on a re-articulation at the economic level in post-war Sri Lanka. This moment in post-war Sri Lanka’s complex and ethnically fractured history is best captured as one where military fiscalism, neoliberal policies and ethno-nationalist politics enmeshed and entangled with each other (see also Kadirgamar 2013), with management attempting to interpellate worker subjectivities befitting of a post-war Sri Lanka. The next section goes deeper into how this process tried to further a narrative of the “new” Sri Lanka.

Re-Scripting the Nation

Earlier, I argued that one of the reasons why the Sri Lankan government incentivized industry leaders to invest in the North and East was to create employment and thwart potential insurrectionary activity. Now I draw upon management interviews to document capital’s role in advancing the creation of a “new”, post-war, unified, and multi-ethnic Sri Lanka, and, in so doing, engaging in a struggle to render which aspects of the past are worth preserving and prioritizing, and which are to be discarded (De Mel 2007). In other words, I contend that this post-war development strategy was not merely about creating new articulations of the relations of dominance and subordination between ethnic groups, but also about the production of meaning (Hall 1985).

“Leaving the war at the door” was a proviso required of all workers and was reasoned to ensure that any strains and antagonisms between the two communities would not surface within the factory premises. In fact, there was a palpably naïve view amongst management that merely putting together the two groups of workers would be sufficient to “figure out a way”. They said that, although there was initial wariness towards each other, this cautiousness has subsided. Yet, during the field visit, a fainting episode by a worker led to interesting discussions with management around how initially a notable proportion of Tamil workers were subject

to spells. Managers themselves suggested that war-related trauma was the likely root cause, and they claimed it was declining because of social pressure from their peer groups rather than because of disciplinary actions or management pressures. As such, the new nation these managers were helping to forge was based on principles of self-negotiation of challenges (“they will figure it out themselves”) that emphasized sameness and downplayed difference. The managers reasoned that not talking about distinctions, which they understood as staying stuck in the past, was necessary to move forward—in line with Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist rhetoric.

While events at the factory, such as spells and fainting episodes, witnessed during the factory visit, led to managers disclosing that workers brought their wartime experiences into the factory setting. Yet, managers displaced its central import in shaping labor–management relations. For example, they said that there had been no training for the managers and executives—not from the company or USAID—on how to effectively work with a traumatized workforce in a sensitive manner, such as learning what trauma responses are and how they might affect work performance. Unsurprisingly therefore, despite, management efforts at emphasizing similarity and teamwork, workers communicated their resistance through high labor turnover and absenteeism—higher than the norm in the rest of Sri Lanka, according to the managers (see also De Neve 2014).

In these factories, in particular, subject formation is not only gendered, but also interacts in complex ways with ethnic identity such that young Tamil women are typically in the most subordinated position. Furthermore, this disciplining is also about silencing certain interpretations of the past and unmarking subjects, which the managers see as necessary to create a new unified vision of post-war Sri Lanka. Managers clearly framed such interventions and the involvement of the military in production as a necessity for security and stability—namely, to get the goods out safely and protect the management (see also Enloe 1989). There was little reflection that workers may interpret the involvement of the military as one of threat and intimidation.

This unmarking and silencing is also apparent in the ways in which language differences were (not) negotiated or even considered important in the post-war garment factory visited. With an all Sinhala-speaking cast of senior managers from outside the region, with no ability to speak Tamil or, it seemed, little need to learn Tamil, they simply relied on workers and managers from the two communities to speak through an informal sign language system. Save the one bilingual middle-manager, a Tamil-speaking training supervisor, they relied upon workers to resolve language barriers themselves:

... the Tamil girls have picked a little bit of Sinhalese, Sinhalese girls have picked up a little bit of Tamil. So, they communicate in that sense ... they will come up with their own strategies and they will work with each other to figure out a way ... because communication is more of necessity.

This downplaying of the importance of shared language and communication by the managers between the two groups may fix workers in a passive victim position, depriving them of opportunities to verbally express and exert their agency. Therefore, the scripting of the nation required affected Tamil workers to embrace capital's

incursion, where it would occur primarily through the victorious community's vision and, literally, on their terms. Letting them "figure it out" was an attempt to emphasize personal accountability, but it ignores the structural inequity of giving Sinhala speakers more access than Tamil speakers to communicate with superiors.¹³

Another way in which the management actively participated in nation building (in addition to workforce-building) was by promoting teamwork. Managers explicitly described how building a team culture was an attempt to foster unity between the two groups of workers: "Even if you go for lunch, the team had to go together ... everything was done as a team, so that created like 'This is our team' [feeling] ... It created that kind of culture". They wanted to forge harmony so that any simmering tensions would be smoothed over as workers got to know and relied on each other.

In this narrative, the workplace was constructed as a site where ethnic harmony could be generated—"business for peace", literally. While it was presented as an exercise to maintain the nation's integrity, there was no hint of acknowledging how collaborative team working is also potentially beneficial for productivity gains (see also Goger 2013; Gunawardana 2014). Harmony and integrity of the post-war nation-state became the primary rhetoric, while the fact that capital benefits from this process as well went unacknowledged.

Sinhala-speaking managers also actively sought to discard practices that they found out-of-sync with instilling cooperation and collaboration amongst workers. While caste politics shape social relations within Sinhala and Tamil communities, Sri Lankan Tamils are more likely to exert caste hierarchies visibly and even blatantly (Thangarajah 2012). In contrast, there is a subtlety to how the Sri Lankan-Sinhalese tends to deploy caste relations within their communities—with its visibility surfacing in marriage proposals (Jayawardena 2002). For the Sinhalese, caste exists but is seen by the dominant community as something that modern and genteel people do not get embroiled in at workplaces. In Factory A, a manager recounted how, when a Tamil worker refused to sit next to another worker at lunch because of caste differences, the management communicated to the worker(s) that caste politics simply did not have a place in the workplace. He said that he informed the worker—and by default all others—that it was fine if they wanted to believe in caste differences but then they would need to go home to eat; and, most crucially, not return to the factory.¹⁴

Caste, then, was to be practiced in the home and kin relationship setting, but it was not allowed in the workplace, because that was not the proper place for it. This particular packaging of caste dynamics within the workplace by (Sinhalese) businessmen was intended to jettison social tensions, but it was also a moment in which the slippage between the "reconciled" post-war nation and capital's interest became apparent. Management did not condemn caste politics as not having a place in "modern" society, it simply had no place in the workplace, since caste tensions also worked against the needed team spirit for capitalism to flourish. Thus, one way that capital participated in re-scripting the national narrative was to discard caste practices from the factory space and inscribe a new boundary between home and work, public and private spaces. The articulation underway was about establishing a boundary between "backward" cultures and "modern" work spaces,

which legitimated managers as agents of modernity and invested them with a meaningful role in shaping culture and subject formation. The linking of different social and structural elements to maintain ongoing material and ideological processes alluded to by Hall (1980) is made evident through these vignettes. Equally, the meaning making inscribed within a militarized managerial manufacturing base is also laid bare, however temporally specific it may be for post-war Sri Lanka.

The interviews at Factory A suggest a plethora of ways in which capital is part of the state's nation-building project and actively promotes certain aspects of Sri Lankan modernity, while casting others aside. Managers deployed discourses of sameness, self-negotiation of challenges, and teamwork, which were framed as important for production but, even more so, necessary for the post-war nation. At the same time, they downplayed the importance of inter-ethnic communication, caste and ethnic differences, trauma, and women workers' past experiences of militarized regimentation. Altogether, by playing up nationalist sentiments, managers effectively silenced Tamil worker voices through this process of unmarking worker-subjects and perpetuated an ethno-nationalist hegemony in post-war Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

The Sri Lankan state has been a highly visible and active player in former conflict areas in the North and East, from the militarization of society to the nation-building rhetoric of an authoritarian regime. The role of capital and its alliances with the state and the military is conspicuous, and, as a result, companies have been able to proceed in setting up industrial production regimes without much debate or critical engagement. The main contribution of this paper, therefore, is to begin unpacking the role of capital–state–military relations in post-war job creation, which is not only about (or even predominantly about) accumulating capital, but also about shaping the ideological realm of production: changing mindsets and instilling new cultures of work. Using Hall (1980) and Sanyal (2007), I traced how this capital–state–military alliance strived to rearticulate excluded populations at moments of crisis, labor shortages and post-war nation-building in the case of Sri Lanka, using discourses on the shop floor that implicate multiple logics of ideological and material aspirations. I also drew on scholarship in feminist geography to examine a hitherto neglected domain of state–capital–military relations within apparel production sites to outline how hegemonic cultures of work play a role in subject formation and to argue that capital is imbricated in Sri Lanka's militarized process of nation building.

Building on a case study of a garment factory in a post-war area coupled with management interviews within and outside this factory and long-term research on the subject, I outlined how through discursive means investment opportunities are opened up via the deployment of Sinhala nationalism, with neoliberal aspirations emerging to the forefront. Putting workers from different groups side-by-side and letting them “figure it out”, building a team ethic, “changing mindsets” to value money, and uplifting the economic standard in the area were the registers invoked. They reflect the meaning making that Hall (1980) remarks is fundamental to how social groups are articulated; or in this case re-articulated in forging a post-war

Sri Lankan identity. Echoing Werner and Bair's (2011) observation that this work of linking is both social and spatial, this preliminary research notes the need to be attentive to spatial facets of uneven and militarized geographies (North and East of Sri Lanka) and within production spaces (see also Kadirgamar 2013).

State and capital hence went about establishing factory sites in a heavily militarized manner, which managers did not find problematic because they believed it necessary to bring jobs and instill modern mindsets. Managers actively worked to promote a narrative of the "new" Sri Lanka as one that values sameness, self-negotiation of challenges, and teamwork; while other aspects, such as inter-ethnic communication and trauma histories were downplayed. All of this served to reinforce the hegemonic Sinhalese-nationalist ideology of a modern nation, while Tamil and Muslim voices in this process were silenced. Since the Sri Lankan apparel sector advocates itself as producing "garments without guilt" in the global clothing landscape and boasts of superlative ethical standards (Goger 2014; Ruwanpura 2016; Ruwanpura and Wrigley 2011), their entry into a post-war setting within Sri Lanka raises pertinent questions worth revisiting around what ethicality and ethical trade means.

Second, it reveals how the past has become a present-day struggle of meaning-making and articulation in Sri Lanka (Hall 1985). For example, this particular workforce was traumatized from the recent war and, yet, managers conceptualized their behaviors as a "mindset" problem, a lack of modern thinking, rather than as behaviors that were sophisticated (for survival) and worth understanding, at the very least for the sake of maintaining productivity. However, treating the workers' mindsets in this way enables the managers to position themselves as knowledgeable benefactors and Tamil communities as "backwards". Further research is needed to assess how Tamil communities are interpreting and responding to these industrialization and nation-building efforts, and how grievances from the past are getting re-configured in the post-war landscape.

Because this was an exploratory study based on limited fieldwork, I am cautious about over-generalizing from this particular factory to imply that all of the new factories in the North and East are being set up in the same way. Indeed, this preliminary research suggests that the management structures and approaches to factory set up vary considerably from one company to the next. What I am calling into question is the portrayal of capitalist development—in this instance, the modern factory floor—as an innocuous, apolitical and unmarked space. Further research is needed to understand how the process of setting up the garment factories and how militarized it is affects community–factory relations, recruitment and retention rates for the factory, and the perceptions of the Tamil workers and communities (see also Kadirgamar 2013). Because this study focused more on management perspectives, more research with workers and their families is necessary to better understand the dynamics of economic and political change underway.

That said, these findings indicate the need for further analysis of the labor process, as it may provide valuable insights into the politics emerging around the formation of a "new" Sri Lanka. Overall, the preliminary work suggests that it is critically important to be attentive to how capitalist processes, whether in post-war or heavily militarized regions, operates; and to assess whether and how it

may be reproducing dynamics of militarization, domination, and silencing—of labor, by “militarized” capital. It is hence not simply the state that ought to be scrutinized but also capital for its possible culpability in post-war Sri Lanka; or other countries emerging from similarly militarized and war-torn landscapes, whether it is Myanmar, Pakistan, Bangladesh or Cambodia.

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Endnotes

¹ Ministry of External Affairs Sri Lanka; Address by President Mahinda Rajapaksa on the 62nd anniversary of independence. <http://www.mfa.gov.lk/index.php/media/news-archive/2287-address-by-president-mahinda-rajapaksa-on-the-62nd-anniversary-of-independence> (last accessed 26 January 2014).

² Although the focus is on capital in the garment sector, other forms of capital have also expanded in the North and East of Sri Lanka. For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) established Public Private Alliance initiatives with private sector actors in the aquaculture, horticulture, logistics, and apparel sectors (USAID 2013). More research is needed to examine the extent to which capital—military—state, more broadly speaking, collaborated in the post-war areas of Sri Lanka.

³ The apparel sector is usually Sri Lanka's primary foreign exchange earner and almost always amongst the top three. The sector accounts for 40% of total exports and 52% of industrial product exports. In 2011, the value of exports was \$4 billion; in 2014 US\$4.9 billion, with the industry creating over 300,000 jobs and 600,000 indirectly. Sri Lanka's top three apparel companies (all domestic capital) are amongst the world's 50 most important suppliers. Atukorale and Ekanayake (2017) trace how the industry evolved from its initial reliance on multinational investment to attracting and strengthening domestic capital to gain a foothold and bolster its image as a niche supplier, including of “ethical” and eco-friendly apparels.

⁴ This phraseology is used deliberately for this section for reasons that should be evident in the empirical sections.

⁵ Our other interviewees not only corroborated this point but also pointed out how individual companies did not need to bring in their own capital to the region.

⁶ While there were a few Muslim workers in the factory, the lack of acknowledging their presence as workers or in the area is striking! In post-war Sri Lanka, the coordinated attacks on Muslims with state complicity are already documented (Ismail 2013), and Batticaloa

district in particular hosts more Muslims than Sinhalese (Ruwanpura 2006; Thangarajah 2012).

⁷ Preliminary research indicates that other companies that set up operations in the North and East had more Tamil-speaking managers (and Tamil managers) than the factory in this case study. Therefore, this is not likely to be a general practice.

⁸ While Sanyal foregrounds the surplus population as linked to the constitutive exclusion of the surplus population capitalist development, and at first glance it may seem as if Sri Lanka's populace in the North and East were excluded as a result only of the civil war (a political factor). Yet, I would argue that decades of civil and ethnic warfare in Sri Lanka and the exclusion of segments of Sri Lankan people also had roots in economic facets (capitalist development) as well as political, social and civil segregation. (My thanks to Vinay Gidwani for motivating me to clarify my thoughts further.)

⁹ Both Lynch (2007) and Hewamanne (2008) show the vocabulary of employing and referring to workers as "girls" or "*lamai*" (children) is the norm in the apparel sector of Sri Lanka. Because of their superlative analysis of its connotations for management-worker relationships, it is not a point belabored here.

¹⁰ Other interviewees too suggested that the trauma workers had encountered required attentiveness to skill training and team building—particularly for reconciliation purposes; this despite the fact that sometimes the workers being only Tamil and having education up to O/Level.

¹¹ Contrary to this view, however, one management respondent explicitly stated that working with traumatized workers required sensitive management of workers; while yet another respondent mentioned how the bulk of their managers were Tamils or Tamil-speaking because it recognized the need for building delicate work relations with workers from a war-affected area. There are clearly distinctions, yet as Mishra (2014) citing Geertz suggests, it is important to be attentive to the splinters too.

¹² Ex-LTTE and other para-military cadre shifting to a regimented work setting may face increased alienation or be further traumatized because they have not received adequate psychosocial counseling. The experiences of such workers require further research.

¹³ The contradiction here is, however, that ineffective communication is likely to have had a negative effect on productivity and efficiency, which the managers said the factory struggles with. Or, in other words, Tamil-speaking workers can use the prevalence of the dominant tongue as a basis for miscommunication and be "under productive", thus engendering a "weapons of the weak" scenario. To assess how Tamil-speaking workers understand and negotiate the use of Sinhala within production sites in predominantly Tamil-speaking areas and amongst Tamil-speaking workers is an area needing further research. (Thanks again to Vinay Gidwani on emphasizing the need to be attentive to this important point.)

¹⁴ He was not alone in making mention of caste politics amongst our interviewees. All our interviewees made a mention of the salience of caste and social hierarchy amongst Sri Lankan Tamils, as if the majoritarian community was devoid of both.

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